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Spy Case Strains Ties With Israel

Recall of Diplomats Dismays Officials Investigating Pollard

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Tension between the United States and Israel rose yesterday amid reports that despite Israel's promises of complete cooperation in the Jonathan Jay Pollard spy case, two of its diplomats reportedly involved in the affair had returned to Israel from the United States.

Israeli officials in Jerusalem confirmed yesterday that the two diplomats, identified as Ilan Ravid, scientific affairs attache at the Israeli Embassy in Washington, and Yosef Yagur, a scientific consul in New York, were recalled to Israel following the arrest last week of Pollard, Washington Post correspondent William Claiborne reported.

Pollard, 31, a civilian Navy counterterrorist analyst, is accused of selling U.S. military secrets to Israel.

A senior State Department official said yesterday that he would be shocked if the reports that the two diplomats returned to Israel were true.

On Wednesday, the State Department expressed disappointment to Israel about what U.S. officials regard as the lack of cooperation so far.

"They asked for time, and that was given to them as a courtesy, but they haven't produced any facts yet," said another U.S. official familiar with the Pollard case.

State Department officials said yesterday that top Israeli Embassy officials in Washington had been told repeatedly during the past week that the United States expected any Israeli diplomats involved in the Pollard case to be made available for interviews by U.S. law enforcement authorities.

That request was first conveyed to Israel on Nov. 21, the day Pollard was arrested, according to State Department officials.

On Monday, amid rumors that Israeli diplomats had either left or were about to leave, Israeli officials were told explicitly that the United States did not want any diplomats involved in the Pollard case to return to Israel, according to State Department officials.

Twice during this past week, on Tuesday and Wednesday, Israel's ambassador to the United States, Meir Rosenne, assured State Department officials that no Israeli diplomats involved in the Pollard case had left the country, according to State Department officials.

A ranking Israeli Embassy official, in giving a somewhat different version of what happened, said yesterday that Israeli officials were first told on Monday that the United States did not want any personnel involved in the Pollard case to return to Israel.

"We told them on Tuesday and Wednesday [that] ever since Monday nobody has left here," the Israeli official said.

"It's a courtesy on our part [to agree to keep diplomats here]," the Israeli official said. "If these people left, they did before the U.S. asked for our courtesy on this."

A U.S. official familiar with the discussions with the Israelis said that following Rosenne's meeting Wednesday with Michael H. Armacost, undersecretary for political affairs, an embassy official notified the State Department that Ro-

senne's assurances that no one had returned to Israel might be incorrect.

The unidentified embassy official told the State Department that after Rosenne's meeting with Armacost the embassy had learned unofficially that some officials might have left.

Rosenne, who was unavailable for comment yesterday, said in an interview Wednesday night that Israel was cooperating fully with the United States and that the results of Israel's investigation into the Pollard affair would be reported completely.

Yesterday, in what may have been a response to the U.S. complaints of lack of cooperation, Israeli state-run television reported that Prime Minister Shimon Peres' inner cabinet had decided to return to the United States any documents obtained from Pollard.

U.S. officials said the State Department had asked for the return of such documents at the Nov. 21 meeting, when it requested interviews with any Israeli diplomats possibly involved with Pollard.

[The Los Angeles Times, citing unnamed sources in Jerusalem, said that a little-known, independent Israeli intelligence operation serving the Ministry of Defense was behind the espionage case.

[The operation is outside the traditional five Israeli intelligence organizations and functions particularly to gather scientific and technical information, the Times reported.]

Officials stressed that investigators have not yet determined whether the two diplomats recalled

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to Israel were involved with Pollard but have asked the Israelis to produce anyone who they determined was implicated.

Peres, in an interview on state television yesterday, indicated that he is opposed to the interrogation of Israeli diplomats by U.S. law enforcement officials, Claiborne reported.

"In the United States, we do not interfere with the judicial process, and in Israel, we act according to Israeli law," Peres said.

Israeli government spokesmen in Jerusalem would not say whether Israeli diplomats would be made available to U.S. investigators.

The Israeli Embassy official here said yesterday that his government was working as fast as it could to get to the bottom of the affair and urged patience.

"Believe me, everybody in the highest echelons of the Israeli gov-

ernment is aware of the fact that this is something that ought to be seriously looked at," the official said.

On Wednesday, an FBI agent testified at a bond hearing for Pollard and his wife, Anne Henderson-Pollard, 25, that Pollard admitted selling documents to representatives of the Israeli government in Washington.

Rafael Eitan, the former senior Israeli intelligence official named in some press reports as the superior of the two recalled diplomats, declined to comment on the allegation, according to the Hebrew-language afternoon daily newspaper, Maariv.

"Concerning the mention of my name in the American and Israeli press as the man who recruited and operated Pollard, perhaps this is a mistake," Eitan said, according to the newspaper. "My name is in the news by mistake."